



Hodges University Key Issues for the Lee Delegation, 2020

Hodges University is proud to be southwest Florida's local, private, non-profit university. Our institution has an important mission as we focus our efforts on deserving students who seek to elevate their lives and to improve their communities.

Hodges University is:

- Comprised of 13.2% of students that are military veterans.
- The **only** federally designated **Hispanic Serving Institution** based in the region and one of only 11 in the state
(https://www.hacu.net/assnfe/CompanyDirectory.asp?STYLE=2&COMPANY_TYPE=1%2C5#Florida).
- Comprised of **student population that is 65% female, 45% Hispanic**, and 83% are 24 years of age or older. Approximately 75% of our students are on the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum, and are pursuing higher education to improve their lives.

Excluding, by definition, the Associate in Arts (AA) degree, essentially all of our degree and credit-bearing certificate programs tie to a Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code and a corollary Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) code. **That means all of our educational programs directly tie to employment outcomes.**

Programs such as Effective Access to Student Education (EASE), formerly Florida Resident Access Grant (FRAG), provide critical financial support to our students, and are key to aiding them in their quest to improve their lives through higher education. For example, for 2018-19, EASE resulted in \$899,210 in direct aid to Hodges University's students – the vast majority of whom are working adults actively participating in the region's economy.

Another area of interest to Hodges University is advancing both the scope and the depth of federal and state funding to support workforce education. The existing model is largely funded through the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education grants (Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 [Perkins IV]) and the transition to the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century (Perkins V) that are available exclusively to public secondary and post-secondary institutions – the K-12 system and the Florida College System. This funding does not support programs higher than the Associate in Science (AS) level, as degree programs delivered at a higher level do not meet the federal definition of “workforce” program.

Statewide for 2020-21, this program provided \$31.9 million to secondary programs and \$30.1 million to post-secondary programs. Locally, Lee County Public School’s secondary distribution is \$934,339 and its post-secondary is \$297,339. FSW’s distribution, which covers the five-county region, was \$808,282 (a \$54,000 increase yoy). **This funding is tremendously important to support workforce programs at these institutions, but we believe that equal benefit can be realized by extending similar funding support to private, non-profit institutions such as Hodges University.** The Perkins Act recognizes that workforce programs are capital intensive, both to start and maintain, and that they are the essence of economic development for the country. We don’t believe that public schools have any greater need nor do a necessarily better job with these programs than a nimble and efficient nonprofit institution can.

That said, the original legislation was conceived in the era of Sputnik, and we believe that it’s well past time to open up discussions about updating the definition and scope of workforce programs, and expanding the use of taxpayer dollars to more institutions providing this key driver of economic growth.

We appreciate all of your efforts to support private non-profit education in Florida, and thank you for service to our great state and its citizens.