

Application Score Sheet

Proposed Project: Tallahassee State College, Wakulla Workforce Development (#339)
Proposed Project/Program County: Wakulla
Board of County Commission Support: Yes
Rural County: Yes
Opportunity Zone:

Total Projected Project Cost: \$27,609,099
Match Provided: \$17,601,153
Triumph Funds Requested: \$10,007,946 (36%)
Triumph Funds Recommended by Staff: \$10,007,946

Score: A
ROI: \$29.9 per Triumph dollar expended

Economic Impact Analysis, and Score

Tallahassee State College (TSC) is requesting \$10,007,946 in Triumph Gulf Coast funding to implement its Healthcare and Teacher Preparation Expansion initiative. The total project budget is \$27,609,099, with Triumph funds representing 36.2% of total costs; the College will contribute \$1,601,153 in grantee funds and is in the process of securing an EDA Disaster Supplemental award of \$16,000,000. Staff recommend that if the Board votes favorably on the proposal, Triumph funding be made contingent upon receipt of the EDA award, as detailed in the budget template. This investment will expand healthcare and teacher preparation training, support acquisition of cutting-edge simulation technologies, and address critical skill gaps in Northwest Florida.

Triumph's investment will be utilized for direct personnel costs, procurement of simulation equipment and classroom furnishings, educational materials and certification fees for students, and advanced instructional software. Major project elements financed by Triumph include high-fidelity simulator manikins, pediatric and labor/delivery room simulation bundles, IT infrastructure, classroom technology, mixed reality instructional tools, and recurring licenses for digital skills training and simulation platforms (such as ENGAGE VR, TOSA®, and ICT software). Funds also support consumable supplies for credentialing exams and professional development required for successful healthcare and teacher certification.

The project is projected by TSC to award 3,695 industry-recognized certifications during the grant term, ranging from Certified Phlebotomy Technician, NCLEX-PN/NCLEX-RN, Certified Clinical Medical Assistant, EHR Specialist, Intravenous Certification for LPNs, to multiple Florida Teacher Certification Examinations and CAPE Digital Tool/ICT credentials. By deploying innovative instructional technologies—AI, AR, VR—and embedding digital skills instruction, TSC will train job-ready graduates prepared to fill high-demand openings in healthcare and education, directly supporting regional labor market priorities. The narrative

highlights robust student teaching, tech-enabled field experiences, and hands-on simulation labs to ensure career readiness and durable workforce pipelines for Northwest Florida. Given the population size of the several rural Triumph counties that are the target demographic, achieving 6,000 certifications implies either a majority of students earning multiple credentials or a high percentage of eligible students earning a certification every year.

The Triumph investment equates to a unit cost of \$2,790 per certification ($\$10,310,461 \div 3,695 = \$2,790$), placing this proposal within the typical cost range of high-impact Triumph-supported workforce programs. Staff rate this project “A” for economic impact, and project an increment to labor income of \$29.9 per Triumph dollar expended.

Project Summary (based on information provided by the applicant)

Tallahassee State College (TSC) requests a \$10,007,946 Triumph grant for healthcare and teacher workforce training programs at the Wakulla Environmental Institute (WEI) campus. The grant funds will be used to complete and furnish the second floor of the new Wakulla Workforce Development (WWD) facility, for equipment, personnel, materials and supplies, recruitment, and professional development.

The state-of-the-art WWD facility will offer workforce educational programming for healthcare and teacher preparation. This new facility will serve a dual-purpose of providing educational opportunities for high-wage, in-demand occupations on the second floor and serving as a hurricane-rated Category 3 storm shelter for residents primarily from Wakulla and Franklin on the first floor currently, there are no shelters in Franklin and only one in Wakulla. By providing a safe haven for residents during natural disasters, this dual- purpose design will enhance community resilience.

TSC anticipates that building construction costs will be covered through a \$16,000,000 U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) Disaster Supplemental Grant. TSC is seeking support for no more than 20% of the total construction cost from Triumph, with Triumph’s contribution specifically allocated to the second- floor classrooms and simulation spaces which directly support Triumph-funded programs. The facility will encompass 50,000 square feet, with approximately 25,000 square feet dedicated exclusively to healthcare and teacher preparation programming.

Currently, TSC operates two campus locations in Wakulla County: the TSC Wakulla Center and the Wakulla Environmental Institute. Although the College owns the WEI campus, the TSC Wakulla Center, located at 2932 Crawfordville Highway, Crawfordville, Florida 32327, is a leased campus space, with the lease set to expire in January 2027.

The WEI location currently provides students with educational opportunities in agriculture education, drones, oyster aquaculture and urban small-plot farming. The TSC Wakulla Center provides students with courses in healthcare, including Clinical Medical Assistant, Medical Administrative Specialist, Patient Care Technician, and Phlebotomy, along with programs in Electrical Pre- Apprenticeship, Landscape and Turf Management, Marine Services Technology, and Veterinary Assisting.

TSC plans to combine the two separate campuses into a single campus location, on the 158-acre campus the College owns, to serve the Wakulla County community better and allow for future expansion. Anticipated impacts and the benefits for the project are expected to extend beyond Wakulla County by providing opportunities for individuals in neighboring Franklin County to have increased access to educational programming within closer proximity.

The healthcare simulation center will provide students with cutting-edge medical technologies, simulation manikins, and virtual reality simulators, providing realistic environments where students can practice clinical skills in a controlled and safe environment. TSC plans to partner with Northwest Florida State College (NWFSC) to utilize the Virtual Reality (VR) software developed for their nursing program as part of a Triumph grant. NWFSC's VR solution is expected to be available in the Spring of 2026.

The new facility will expand the current healthcare offerings provided at the TSC Wakulla Center to include Practical Nursing (LPN) and Practical Nursing Bridge (RN), along with specialized training in IV therapy and medical esthetician occupations. The expanded program offerings in the healthcare sector will increase the availability of trained medical assistants, nurses, and other healthcare professionals, improving patient care and public health outcomes. Educational programming and clinical experiences will be designed to align with specialties and areas of greatest need identified by employer partners in the region. This focus will ensure that graduates are equipped with the skills most in demand, enhancing their employability and addressing workforce shortages. This is especially vital in a rural county, where healthcare access can be limited, often requiring residents to travel long distances for medical services.

Wakulla faces significant challenges in meeting the demand for healthcare professionals. The county has a notably low concentration of nurses, with only 58.09 nurses per 10,000 residents, compared to higher ratios in neighboring counties (jsr.org). This shortage is compounded by the fact that approximately 79.1% of Wakulla County's workforce is employed outside the county, ranking it 6th out of 67 counties in Florida for workforce outflow (lmsresources.labormarketinfo.com).

Historically, partnerships between TSC and local healthcare facilities have resulted in a job placement rate exceeding 95% for graduates seeking employment. TSC expects this high placement rate to continue with the expansion of healthcare training programs designed to match projected demand.

In June 2023, Tallahassee Memorial Healthcare announced their plan to significantly expand services with the construction of a new Urgent Care Center located on a 2.25 acre site in Crawfordville. TMH's expansion with an Urgent Care is in addition to their Primary Care and Walk-In Clinic and Outpatient Rehabilitation Centers currently operating in Wakulla County. The new Urgent Care is anticipated to hire both LPN's and RN's as well as phlebotomists and other healthcare professionals.

Wakulla is experiencing a significant shortage of qualified educators in elementary, secondary, and special education. In 2022, the Florida Department of Education identified critical teacher

shortages in subjects such as English, science, reading, and math, which directly impact both elementary and secondary education. These challenges highlight the urgent demand for qualified teaching professionals in the county.

The new facility will address Wakulla and Franklin teacher shortages by equipping future educators with the skills and credentials needed to fill critical roles, especially in elementary, secondary, and special education. Strengthening the local teacher pipeline will enhance the quality of education, create more balanced student-teacher ratios, and support better academic achievement.

Instruction for TSC's Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education and Bachelor of Science in Exceptional Education offers a hybrid approach with classroom-based and online learning. TSC's program is designed as a holistic approach to teacher education by integrating professional soft skills with content knowledge and field experience to position graduates to be competitive in the job market effectively.

In addition to recent high school graduates, TSC also seeks to recruit career changers who hold a minimum bachelor's degree through a fast-track teacher preparation program. The program would be designed to quickly transition individuals with a degree into certified teaching roles. In addition to the required state certification, TSC will provide training for teachers to earn CAPE Digital Tool certifications, so they are qualified to teach these certifications in the classroom. Integrating Digital Tools into elementary education can significantly enhance both teaching and learning experiences, setting students up for success in a technology-driven world. TSC will collaborate with FSU ASCENT and other Triumph grantees on which training and certifications are needed.

TSC Teacher training in Wakulla will include the integration of AI, AR, and VR technology into instructional practices. AI-powered learning platforms will personalize learning by analyzing individual progress and providing tailored content and feedback. These platforms can adapt to the teacher's learning pace, ensuring mastery of each concept before moving on. VR simulations will offer realistic classroom management and instructional strategies practice, allowing teachers to experience and respond to various classroom scenarios in a controlled, immersive environment. This hands-on practice can help teachers build confidence and refine their skills without the pressure of a real classroom.

Training to effectively integrate AI, AR, and VR into teaching practices will allow future educators to enhance learning outcomes and improve student engagement by leveraging these advanced technologies. This comprehensive approach ensures that future educators have the skills, knowledge, and confidence to excel in their teaching careers.

In addition to leveraging the relationship with Xennial to create a virtual reality/augmented reality solution for teacher preparation focused on de-escalation for teacher/student and teacher/parent interactions, TSC is in conversations with the University of West Florida and Dr. John Pecore about a project they are working on, in conjunction with other universities, to provide virtual and mixed-reality simulations to support teacher preparation—particularly in

classroom management, instructional practice, and preparing teachers to navigate varied teaching contexts.

University of West Florida is using the ENGAGE platform (<https://engagevr.io>) to assist with their teacher preparation program. TSC is considering using the platform for both education and healthcare programming. ENGAGE offers a powerful and immersive virtual reality (VR) and extended reality (XR) environment that can significantly enhance both teacher preparation and healthcare occupational training. What makes ENGAGE unique is its integration of spatial computing, generative AI, and multi-device accessibility, allowing learners and educators to interact in realistic, 3D environments from anywhere using VR headsets, tablets, phones, or computers.

For teacher preparation, ENGAGE enables future educators to practice classroom management, instructional delivery, and student engagement strategies in simulated environments. The platform supports curriculum-aligned content creation, AI-powered avatars for role-playing, and collaborative tools like whiteboards and document sharing. These features allow pre-service teachers to rehearse real-world scenarios, receive feedback, and build confidence in a safe, controlled setting. Research cited by ENGAGE shows that VR can improve knowledge retention by up to 75% and significantly reduce failure rates in academic settings.

For healthcare training, ENGAGE supports lifelike clinical simulations where students can practice procedures, patient communication, and emergency response without risk. The platform allows for the creation of digital twins of real-world medical environments and supports multi-user sessions for team-based training. AI integration enables dynamic patient interactions and scenario customization, which are critical for developing clinical judgment and soft skills.

TSC will utilize its existing partnerships within the Wakulla County community to address workforce needs in the education and healthcare sectors. By implementing an innovative, research-backed training model, TSC aims to attract and retain top-quality students from disproportionately affected counties at various points in their education and careers.

TSC plans to build a pipeline of highly qualified education graduates to meet the teacher vacancies within the Wakulla County School District and other surrounding counties. The 311 students trained in education-related programs over the course of the grant are expected to fill approximately 311 new teacher positions in the local education system. TSC will work closely with WCSB to expand educational opportunities to the students enrolled at Wakulla High School through dual enrollment opportunities.

